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Plato himself allowed the subject-matter of discourse to be the speaker's own vision of the absolute truth, thus individualizing the abstraction until we cannot regard it as fundamentally alien from our modern conception of experience, in the largest sense of the word.

Granting this substantial identity, then, we have only to prove that Plato's idea of personal experience as the subject-matter of discourse is a real factor in modern rhetorical theory. For this no long argument is required. We find this idea theoretically expressed in rhetorical treatises even as far back as Quintilian, in the implied definition of discourse as self-expression, a conception recently popularized by such writers as Arnold and Pater. This notion of discourse, neglecting that part of the process of communication by which an experience is set up in the mind of the writer, emphasized exclusively that segment which develops the experience of the writer into articulate form. Being thus incomplete as was the sophistic theory of discourse, it served only to supplement that by bringing out into clear consciousness the Platonic truth that the subject-matter of discourse has a direct relation to the mental processes of the writer.

On the practical side this truth has appeared in the comparatively recent decay of formal instruction in rhetoric, and the correlative growth of composition work in our schools. This practical study of composition, in so far as it deserved its name, displaced the writing of biographical essays, largely drawn from encyclopediac sources, and of treatises on abstract subjects far removed from any natural interests of the student who wrote. Both these lines of effort proving relatively profitless, the experiment was tried of drawing the material for writing directly from the every-day experience, observation and thinking of the student,—an experiment whose results proved so successful that the practice has long been established in most of our schools. This is a piece of history so recent and so well-known that it need not be dwelt upon. Its import, however, is worth noting. It means the practical, though perhaps unconscious, acceptance of Plato's principle that the subject-matter of discourse bears a vital relation to the mind of the speaker. And by virtue of this, it means the

complete closing of the circuit of communication between speaker and hearer.

So far, then, the rising modern rhetorical theory agrees with the doctrine of Plato. It may, perhaps, differ from him in making discourse a process somewhat less self-conscious than he seems to have conceived it, arising from the speaker's primitive social instinct for sympathy, or (to put it more technically) for closer relations with his environment, rather than from any explicit desire to communicate his own vision of the truth to another. But this modification affects neither the nature of the process itself nor its ultimate outcome. Both the Platonic and the modern theory of discourse make it not an individualistic and isolated process for the advantage of the speaker alone, but a real communication between speaker and hearer, to the equal advantage of both, and thus a real function of the social organism.

This conception of discourse is rich in implications which Plato never saw, and which no modern has yet formulated. To this formulation, however, our practical teaching of English with all its psychologic and sociological import, is daily bringing us nearer. It cannot be long before we shall recognize a modern theory of discourse as large in its outlines as Plato's and far better defined in its details; a theory which shall complete the social justification which rhetoric has so long been silently working out for itself.

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GERMAN LANGUAGE.

Materials for German Prose Composition.

With notes and vocabulary. Vol. ii, Narrative and Descriptive. By MAX POLL, Ph.D. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1899. 12mo, pp. 133+168 (Vocab.).

German Composition, based on humorous stories. By CARLA WENCKEBACH. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1899. 12mo, 282 pp.

THE mastery of any language naturally involves the power to express one's thoughts in

it both in speech and in writing. These two are intimately associated, and it is a question in my mind whether a student can write a foreign language easily and accurately, save as he possesses a corresponding power to speak it. For both there are alike necessary a command of the proper words and idioms, which are the symbols of thought, and an instinctive feeling for the correct order. It is true that one can speak with reasonable accuracy who cannot write, but it does not seem to me that one can write who does not possess a ready command of spoken forms. If this be true, it has an important bearing upon what should constitute the contents of a volume for teaching composition in a foreign language. The language should be simple and natural, and the subjects should be such as lend themselves readily to practical use. Conversations, descriptions, and attractive stories are demanded, but the language and the constructions should be those of familiar intercourse, of every-day life. No one speaks like a book; if he does so, he becomes intolerable. If it were possible to teach a lofty literary form of expression, colored with the individuality of some particular author, the acquisition would be in the main useless. The student would be powerless to discuss subjects with which he is daily associated, and upon his arrival in Germany his material for conversation or communication would utterly fail.

What is to be attained by German Composition does not always seem to have been clearly before the makers of such books. There are natural and inevitable limitations to what may be demanded in this direction. One limitation is based upon the time available for the study of a modern language, which is in itself restricted; another is to be found in the acquisition possible in the case of the average student in writing German.

It is evident that in the study of any language this feature must be subordinate to the general end. It must be proportional, and in harmony with other essential aims in linguistic study. A knowledge of the literature is the one universal requirement. Grammar and so-called philological study as an aid to this have their place, and conversation presents certain valid but not general claims.

Unless a vocabulary and a facility in the use

of foreign idioms dwell already in the mind, the first steps in writing are a mechanical process. The pupil has no feeling for the language which can guarantee the accuracy of any rendering. He is dependent at first upon the arbitrary statement of the teacher. If he has to choose laboriously the proper words from a vocabulary, and arrange them in a formal order, he has but a vague conception of the admissibility of any translation. Repeated instruction may fix the order and the use of the proper words in his mind. As a result, he acquires a knowledge of construction, which, in itself, is a valuable acquisition, and possibly one not to be obtained save through writing.

After an exercise has been written and revised by the teacher, few pupils remember it so that they can reproduce it if called upon to do so. Students seldom possess a verbal memory which enables them to retain a thought in a foreign language save as it is impressed upon the memory by repetition and familiar use. It is rare even in one's native language for a writer to retain accurately, after writing, the exact form in which his statement has been made. If this is so in one's own speech, it is true in a more emphatic sense in translations into a foreign language. There is, therefore, a certain limitation in what we may expect to achieve in teaching composition to the general student.

A recognition of such facts as these would aid in determining the place of composition in any course of study, and guide our estimate of the value of the results attained. It would also suggest the character and fix the value of any manual of instruction.

The first aim in such a volume would be to impress upon the pupil the use of familiar words and forms and principles of construction. Later, when he has read much easy prose, and attained a certain feeling for the language, he should re-write exercises from connected narrative, the text of which supplies the words and suggests the form of arrangement. His knowledge of what constitutes accuracy does not then rest merely upon the authority of the teacher, but he learns to write from the language itself.

Such a volume would naturally contain only

language in its familiar use. Thought is expressed in certain stereotyped forms. It is this which makes the interchange of ideas possible. If the pupil can master these, he has made a positive and useful acquisition which is of accepted value everywhere. The vocabulary should be specially chosen and restricted. The variety of expression possible by a mastery of from four to six hundred words is practically unlimited. The selections should be graded so that there is an orderly development of the principles of the language.

The question arises whether such a volume cannot be made which, while unfolding the principles of the language, shall, at the same time, contain a practical speech which the student can use in travel, in visiting a city, and in familiar descriptions. Such a volume of selections would, in its contents, border closely on the material used in conversational classes. Letters embracing lively narrative should also be included. The choice of selections from the German, skilfully translated and re-adapted, has ordinarily the advantage that they are free from embarrassing English idioms. The language, as has already been said, should not be stilted or even classical. When thought receives a certain stamp or color from the individuality of the author, features are introduced which transcend the forms of ordinary speech, and which it is not desirable to imitate. The writings of Mark Twain, Raumer, Macaulay, do not afford the requisite material for such a book. Even the Vicar of Wakefield, which was once the favorite vehicle for such instruction, is too full of quaint and antiquated expressions to afford the best results. Latin essays in the English universities were formerly written in the style of Tacitus or of Cicero. Such imitations of characteristic features of an author are to be avoided. If the pupil acquires the accepted currency of familiar expression, it is all that we can ask. A dominance of fairy tales is likewise injudicious. Mere infantile speech cannot interest an advanced student, and, though usually simple, presents no adequate substitute for the direct and serviceable speech of travel and familiar intercourse.

The first of the two new composition books whose titles are given above is intended to be

"an alternative collection" to that made by Prof. von Jagemann, and follows, according to the editor, the same general lines. It is also accompanied by the same vocabulary. It contains foot-notes guiding to the proper rendering, and refers constantly to von Jagemann's very useful "Elements of German Syntax."

Between the two volumes of this series there is little difference in the relative difficulty of the selections. The later has greater variety, and a more graphic quality. It is not quite clear why two volumes on the same general plan are desirable. The original vocabulary was excellent, and the use of one vocabulary for both volumes has less objection than one might anticipate. Words in the text which do not occur in the vocabulary have been inserted in foot-notes. The editor has not in all cases been successful in supplying the words which are missing in the vocabulary. The omissions are, however, probably few. Occasionally we miss notes which would have aided certain renderings for which the vocabulary is inadequate. There is no note on "to look out of the window at" etc., p. 23, l. 12, and the definitions in the vocabulary would not suggest the correct words. We miss in the vocabulary such words as "merchant ships" p. 79, l. 7; "uneventful" p. 78, l. 4, etc., etc. Few students could render "Cheap Furniture Exhibition" from the meagre note "Compound." In the note to "all of the first six pages" p. 33, l. 1, "all" is translated by *alle*, as if modifying "pages." It may be doubted whether the choice of selections from modern English reading books affords the best models for reproduction. Similarly, the geographical and historical selections, including one from Walter Scott, as well as that from *Die Familie Buchholz*, are not the best adapted to the purpose sought. The book, however, has substantial merit.

The volume by Prof. Wenckebach contains in the beginning German stories, with a paraphrase on the opposite page for re-writing, and, at the foot of the page, conversations based upon the text, together with notes. The method is excellent and rests upon sound pedagogical principles. The selections are, in general, good, and include letters. There are useful supplementary chapters, one containing drill-exercises, and a very serviceable one

upon word-order. The vocabulary contains an English-German as well as a German-English part. The principle of humor adopted in making the selections is perhaps calculated to awaken interest, though not necessarily educative. It is not clear what is gained by reproducing Eckstein's "Visit to the Carcer" in lisping English.

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ITALIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE.

1. *First Italian Book*: Grammar, Exercises, and Examination Papers, with Vocabulary. By Rev. A. C. CLAPIN, M. A., St. John's College, Cambridge, and Bachelier ès Lettres of the University of France. London and Paris: Hachette and Company, 1897. 18mo, pp. viii, 70.

2. *Un Curioso Accidente*. Commedia in tre atti di CARLO GOLDONI. Edited with Introduction and Notes by J. D. M. FORD, Ph. D., Instructor in Harvard University. Boston: D. C. Heath & Co., 1899. 12mo, pp. ix, 78.

1. MR. CLAPIN states in his preface that the purpose of his little grammar is to meet the requirements of those who have only a limited time to devote to the study of the grammar and idioms of the Italian Language. Certainly it is not a suitable work for the serious student of Italian, not only because of its extreme brevity, but also because of the incorrectness of some of its statements.

The synoptical arrangement restricts each subject to its own page. The grammar portion of the book is followed by exercises, a page of exercises being provided for every corresponding page of grammar.

The great danger in a short, grammatical treatise like the one before us, is the temptation to sacrifice clearness and accuracy to brevity. That Mr. Clapin has yielded to this temptation in many instances will be seen from the corrections which follow. P. 1: The statement that "the vowels *a, e, i, o* are sounded as in French" is misleading. The usual sound of French *a*

is that found in words like *page, par, a*, but this sound is much closer than the Italian *a*. The open *a* sound in the French *bas, âge, flamme* is pronounced like the Italian *a*, but the open *a* in *bas*, etc., is less frequent than the close *a* in *page*, etc.; hence, one could not say that *a* is pronounced in Italian as it is in French. In like manner the varieties of *e* and *o* sounds in French would hardly permit one to compare the pronunciation of these vowels in French with the sounds usually given to them in Italian. The cases where they differ in pronunciation should at least be stated.

In the second place, the statement that *a, e, i, o* are pronounced in Italian as in French will be of little or no value to those for whom this grammar was intended. It presupposes a knowledge of French, and, as this grammar was written primarily for English students, the phonetic equivalents of the Italian vowels should have been given in English rather than in French. P. 2: The author states that

"when the plural noun ends in *gli*, the *g* of the article *gli* is dropped (that is, *li* is used) to prevent the repetition of the same sound; for example, *li scogli*."

Fornaciari² gives *gli scogli* without mentioning *li* in this connection. P. 17: While discussing verbs in *ire* the author says:

"twelve only are conjugated throughout like *sentire*, namely: *bollire, cucire, dormire, fuggire, partire, pentirsi, sdruccire, seguire, sentire, servire, sortire, vestire*."

This statement is misleading. Although all the verbs given above may be conjugated like *sentire*, only *dormire, fuggire, pentire, servire, vestire* are always conjugated thus. *Aborrire, bollire*, and verbs in *-vertire* are generally, and *assorbire, inghiottire, mentire, nutrire, tossire*, are often conjugated like *sentire*. *Partire* and *sortire* are, when transitive, inflected like *finire*; when intransitive, like *sentire*. P. 18: the statement that "the conj. pronouns follow the verb (and are joined to it) in the Inf., Gerund, Past Part. and Imperative" should be modified. These pronouns are joined to the past participle only when it is used without an

¹ Cf. John E. Matzke, *A Primer of French Pronunciation*. New York, 1897, § 15.

² Fornaciari, *Grammatica Italiana dell' Uso Moderno*. Firenze, 1879, p. 78: "Si usa la seconda forma (sing. *lo*, plur. *gli*) davanti a nome maschile che cominci per *s* impura o per *s* o per *j*. P. es. *lo stúdio, gli stúdi; lo scòglio, gli scògli*."